THE FRATERS

John R. Stewart

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THE FRATERS

THE FRATERS

BY

JOHN R. STEWART

Then let us pray that come it may—
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be.—ROBERT BURNS.

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No. 1.

To

HESTER ANNE ROGERS STEWART

MY WIFE

who has illustrated in her
life, in commendable
measure, the only power
which overcomes evil,
this book is affectionately
dedicated.

THE AUTHOR.

FOREWORD.

It is intended that this little volume shall fill a niche hitherto unoccupied. It relates to a definite development of our day. It is hoped that the purpose of the author may become impressively manifest to the reader. Irreconcilable forces struggle for supremacy, continuing the conflict between "the root of all evil" and the "greatest thing in the world." Brotherhoods are considered and compared. Meantime the just claims of "our forgotten friends" forge toward the front for fuller recognition.

J. R. S.

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INTRODUCTION.

We have in this book a simple story of compelling interest. It will hold the attention of thoughtful persons, not simply because it has a well-constructed plot and employs characters that are impressively human, but because the stream of action which runs through the book is red with lifeblood and the quick heartbeat is felt in every chapter.

Yet this is not all. The story is really a clarion call to an exercise of one of the holiest duties to which Christianity has been called—the proper support of the retired preacher who has been, and is still to a great extent, the Church's "forgotten man."

No one is better fitted than the author for writing such a story. For years he has faithfully superintended in a connectional way the sacred interests of the "forgotten man" of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He knows the needs of that pathetic figure. He

knows also the heart of his Church. He has written a unique story, which makes its appearance at an opportune time. It should have been written long ago. It should be read by many, not only in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but in every Protestant denomination which is awaking to the pressing needs of the retired and unpensioned preacher.

THOMAS N. IVEY.

NASHVILLE, TENN., March 24, 1916.

THE FRATERS.

I.

The Family.

IN the autumn of 1866 Joshua Frater and Matilda Saxe were married at her father's home, eight miles east of Lexington, the Rev. Thomas Robertson, the young circuit rider, performing the ceremony. They began housekeeping at once on his farm, in the old Anderson home, three miles from Lexington, on the river road. The old residence was a two-story frame, innocent of paint, situated one hundred yards east of the highway, with its broad side frankly facing the passing public. In the front yard stood two large cedar trees like faithful sentinels keeping watch against all unseemly intruders; but they were probably ineffective against spooks, for it was commonly remarked by the "hands" on the place that the house was

"ha'nted." The large new barn had been erected another hundred yards in the rear of the residence.

Young Frater and his frugal wife soon lifted the remainder of the debt on the rich three hundred acres. Corn, cotton, and live stock brought the money in a hurry. In five years he had a strong and growing bank account. Let it be noted in passing that Lexington was the county seat of the good county of Franklin, a thriving town of some four thousand people. The public buildings were the courthouse, four churches, and the Lexington Female College, a reputable institution which was the pride of the little city.

After residing eight years on the Anderson place, Joshua remarked to his wife as they stood under the cedars one October afternoon: "Matilda, we have enough money in bank to buy that Nixon farm, which runs up to the edge of town. It's a good place of a hundred acres, has a nice eight-room house on it, just half a mile from the courthouse, and I hear that

it is for sale at a low figure for cash. Our money in bank is not drawing much interest, and I think this would be a good investment. What do you think about it?"

"Why, Joshua, I think it is the thing to do; for we are unhandy to school here, and Martha has to go to school, you know. The church would be closer and everything handier. I should like to live there too, I think."

In less than a week Joshua showed his wife the deed to the Nixon farm. Said he: "We get immediate possession." No time was lost in moving to the new home. Mrs. Frater was happy to make the change; for she had never gotten over her first impression of the old Anderson place, that "it was lonesome." After they had settled in the new home, she said: "I like this house. There is plenty of room, and it's convenient too. I think it's a pretty place."

The cottage had eight rooms, with a rock foundation, cross halls, and porches both front and back. The house was painted white with

green trimmings; and, standing back of the four sugar maples in the blue-grass yard, which had a white paling fence in front, there was an aspect of comfort and hospitality about the place that was decidedly pleasing.

Joshua Frater retained the Anderson plantation, over which he continued personal supervision after he had moved to the Nixon farm. His opportunities were now enlarged, while his labors and financial rating were increased.

During the following decade the breezes of prosperity continued to blow favorably upon the Fraters. Blessed far above the average household with health and happiness and never having suffered a severe loss or a bereavement, it may be safely assumed that this happy couple had reached the meridian of their earthly day in unclouded enjoyment. Their children, of whom there were five, were normal. The eldest was Martha, the youngest Myrtle; while the orderly "come-betweens" were Newton, Silas, and Joseph.

As we have already seen, Joshua Frater was

a thoroughgoing man of affairs and industrious to the limit. Guiding and restraining his children with a well-concealed, velvet-gloved hand of despotism, he secured from them unhesitating obedience. Living in a commercial age, as he did, it could not be truthfully said of him that he was out of harmony with his time. In business he made every edge cut and every stroke count. His model helpmeet cooperated with him to his entire satisfaction. She was not one of those women of whom it has been said: "She pitches out at the back door as fast as her husband can shovel in at the front door."

The Frater sons were "chips off of the old block." Much to the father's gratification, they took to business like "ducks to water." Mr. Frater believed in educating boys to prepare them for business, so that they might "take care of themselves"; but he admitted that girls, who do not have an equal chance to get out and "hustle," should be given good educational opportunities. True to his theories, he gave Mar-

tha exceptional advantages; and she made the most of them. Newton, the next of age, being five years younger, had by so much the better showing. It must not be supposed that because she possessed a rare type of beauty and had a charming personality she was dull of intellect. Far from it. As sometimes occurs, nature had apparently assembled all the choice endowments intended for the entire family group and lavished them upon her. She was not only intellectual, but also endowed with rare common sense. While no human may be held faultless, it must be admitted that the most critical were unable to discover even a modicum of selfishness in the mixture of her noble qualities. Graduating with honors from Lexington College in 1885, she was happy that the address to her class was delivered by Dr. Thomas Robertson, who had been the pastor when she united with the Church. The degree of D.D. was conferred upon him in 1877 by this institution, since when he had been one of its trustees.

Scarcely had Martha become comfortably

adjusted in the familiar routines of her father's orderly home after her brilliant school career and graduation when the rude destroyer of all pleasant human relations interrupted. The illness of her tenderly beloved mother was brief, the call inexorable, and the answer to the summons was made with Christian resignation. Dr. Robertson was summoned to assist the pastor in the funeral service and paid a beautiful tribute to the womanly worth of Mrs. Frater.

The intolerable hours of loneliness came and went with painful tardiness. As Martha sat alone in her room one afternoon she said to herself: "O these trying days, now lengthened into weeks, since my precious mother was taken! How my heart aches for my poor father! He is so disconsolate, restless by day and sleepless by night. What the result is to be, I dread to think about! And the dear boys and Myrtle—how I shall strive more than ever to be a 'little mother' to them! I must not lose my nerve. I must be brave for their sakes. But

O how hard it is to be cheerful and sunshiny when one feels like screaming for relief from the pressure of grief and responsibility! My eighteenth birthday has passed. It is the time that I should naturally be most happy and free from care, but recent events have set forward the calendar for me at least ten years. My solemn responsibilities have quickened the pace of maturity. But my course is clear. I must live for father and the children. More and more it is dawning upon me that one should not live for self." So ended her soliloquy as her father entered.

After being seated he said: "Daughter, you are such a comfort and support to me since your mother left us! I do not see how I could have gotten through these fearful weeks without your unselfish assistance. The boys look to you now for sympathy and direction very much as they did to their mother. I have been so terribly torn up in my mind that I am not fit for business, and I don't know what I should have done without your clear head and good

judgment in the management of our affairs. But I am beginning now to get in harness again, and maybe we can get along some better from this time on. The boys help me out a good deal already. I think they will be attentive to business."

II.

The Inevitable Obtrusion.

SINCE the death of Mrs. Frater the busy, eventful years have gone by like an orderly procession. Newton is a young man, and Silas and Joseph follow hard after, while the "little Miss" imagines she is almost a young lady.

Martha Frater easily held first place in popular esteem among the many attractive young ladies of the community. With young and old she was a prime favorite. Educated, cultured, and refined, she possessed a type of beauty which was extremely rare, if not unique. Her figure of perfect symmetry, slightly above medium height, was graceful in every movement. The copious crown of waving auburn hair, always deftly arranged, contrastingly harmonized with her broad forehead of marble and large, intelligent brown eyes, which had in them the power to look calmly in the face of

fate. The unusual facial figure was completed by a slightly aquiline nose, a model mouth with beautiful teeth, and a strong chin from which descended a full round throat as fair as a lily. Her voice, as soft as the notes of a dove in springtime, was, in its final inflections, as firm as her sense of eternal right. But withal she seemed wholly unconscious of her own loveliness. Her mental aptitude and spiritual capacities came fully up to the high expectation created by her impressive presence.

It was not remarkable that her company should be sought by the best type of young men of her acquaintance, nor that Hubert Howard was often seen at the Frater home, not merely as a casual caller, but intent on a serious purpose poorly concealed.

Hubert Howard had a strong physique bordering on the rugged. Standing full six feet, with broad shoulders and full chest, having a striking face lighted up with steady but kindly blue eyes, moving with a firm step indicating correctly decision of character, he was

"A combination and a form, indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man."

He had a liberal education, was intelligent and well informed through much reading, and was an interesting conversationalist. Well established in business and prosperous, he was regarded as decidedly the best matrimonial prospect of all the young men in that immediate section. In fact, one might travel a whole day without finding his equal.

What a handsome pair Hubert Howard and Martha Frater were as occasionally seen in their leisurely afternoon strolls, and apparently how well suited to each other! Some went so far as to say: "They were foreordained for each other from the foundation of the world."

Many weeks had passed since Hubert had frankly confessed to Martha that she was absolutely indispensable to his happiness. Martha had always held him in the highest regard, and her increasing admiration had gradually ripened into sincere affection, which state of

her emotions she had not wittingly disclosed to any living soul. She understood perfectly his attitude and purpose and what to expect. She felt that her situation was much involved and full of complexity. It was the old struggle over again between the lure of the heart and the call of duty. A less thoughtful and conscientious young woman would have settled the conflict without the slightest hesitation by simply following her own inclination, but that was impossible to her. She would be the gladdest soul in the wide universe if she were perfectly free to follow her own feelings and put an end to Hubert's suspense; but the motherless home filled her vision and at times shut out everything else. "Father, the boys, and Myrtle—how could I be selfish with them, even to win the greatest prize on earth? O my heart, I command thee! O my heart, I restrain thee for their sakes! But Hubert is coming this evening and will insist that the matter be settled. How gladly would I escape the ordeal! And yet I find myself half wishing that the time

would speed on more rapidly. Even more than what I suffer on my own account shall I be wounded to disappoint him. I hear father's familiar footfalls. Come in, father."

"Excuse me, daughter, if I seem to hang around you a good deal recently since my health has been so bad."

"No apology, father. It's a pleasure to have you come and talk whenever you wish."

"I just wanted to go over some little matters with you. I do not know how this disease I have is going to terminate. The doctor gave me very little encouragement to-day. I realize that the boys are no longer mere boys, but young men. It is a great satisfaction to me that they are attentive to business and seem to know the value of a dollar. With your good judgment and advice, I have no fear that they will succeed. They are all good money-makers. And there's another little matter—maybe not so little, either—that I wish to mention. You have been such a helpful, unselfish daughter. You have enabled me to keep things to-

gether, the children look to you so much as a guide, and everything has gone on so well; but somehow of late—O it may be just a notion of mine, but I think I may not be with you long."

"O father, please don't talk that way!"

"Well, I was just thinking that if anything should happen to me, Myrtle is young and inexperienced, you know. But I suppose you have different plans. If you could all hold together, you would be such a bond of strength to the others; but I guess that can't be, and perhaps I should not mention it. I suppose, of course, that you may be interested in Hubert, and I think that he is interested in you; and that's all right, but"—

"Father, I have fought all over that battle field. Perhaps I should not admit it. And the struggle has been something terrific. It remains to be seen which shall triumph, self or other selves, the altruistic or the egoistic spirit. But, father, how could I deny you and the children anything, even to the spending of my life for you?"

"Well, I don't ask it of you, daughter. I make no request. I know that you will do what you think is best. Hubert Howard is a fine young man and is doing well in the world."

Joshua Frater could not have made a comment which, from his viewpoint, would have been more highly complimentary to the young man. Like many other men of his time, Joshua habitually held the dollar so close to his eye that it obscured his vision of some of the things that matter most. Nevertheless, it must be said that he was a Church member and attended religious services, as did his children, with some regularity. In the interest of perfect candor, however, it ought to be stated that his religion had something of the sound of the clanging cymbal. He regarded the Church as being unquestionably the greatest civilizing agency in existence, and therefore he could afford to pay something toward the support of foreign missions. The Church was also a good insurance society to take a risk in against the uncertain future. This really was a necessary

precaution for any careful man to observe. It was good business to be religious. He paid his dues punctually. Joshua Frater, in truth, had many commendable qualities.

The Frater sons gave evidence of being not less energetic and successful than their father, but were more grasping. As the three boys sat together one evening Newt remarked: "Father has done well for his day and opportunities, but times have changed. There are new methods now. Enlargement is the word, expansion. The old ways are too slow."

"Yes," said Joe, "father made most of his money farming. That's a slow way, but it's sure."

"Well," remarked Si, "he really made more money trading than he ever did on the farm."

"Since we started the store and bank we have done better," added Newt, "and we must branch out on different lines of business just as fast as it is safe to do so and all hold together. There is strength in union."

"Yes, father has always told us that," an-

swered Si, "and all of us together can look after a good deal of business; but I fear that father won't be able to do much more, as far as he is concerned."

"No, he is getting weaker every day," replied Joe. "I am afraid his work is about done."

"But I'll tell you, boys," said Newt, "Martha's got the best head of any of us, even for business. Father has talked over his affairs with her so much that she's got it all."

"O, but let me tell you," rejoined Si, "that fellow Howard is going to get the benefit of all sister knows. Do you hear me?"

"It looks that way to me too, Si," said Joe. "I wish he would stay away from here and quit interfering with our arrangements."

"Listen, boys," remarked Newt. "If she does go, we've lost the strongest member of the firm. There's the supper bell."

Mr. Frater went from his room, where he had been sitting alone in deep meditation, and took his accustomed seat at the table. He was

not feeling well and had but little to say at supper. The brothers lingered a few minutes longer in earnest conversation. As they entered the dining room Myrtle said: "If you boys are as hard to get away from the table as you are to get to it, there won't be much left when you get through."

"That's all right, boys," replied Martha. "If appetite runs riot until the table looks like a cyclone had struck it, that makes no difference, for I like to see people eat heartily."

"They say the way to compliment the cook is to eat a lot," observed Si.

"Just so," answered Joe. "I've always enjoyed paying my compliments that way."

Myrtle said: "Sister doesn't seem to have much appetite to-night. I guess she must be looking for company."

"Yes, it looks mighty cozy and nice by that good fire in the sitting room," remarked Si. "Expectation of some sort is standing on tiptoe, I'm certain. What's the matter with that old dog howling so? Bad sign, they say."

"Don't be superstitious, Si. You youngsters are very suggestive in your remarks this evening," replied Martha. "I think you had better simmer down a bit." Then she inquired very tenderly: "Father, I fear you are not feeling well. You don't seem to be eating much."

Mr. Frater replied: "No; I have felt very unwell all the evening, an unusual sort of feeling that I can't well describe. I am not hungry."

With much cheery chat and verbal cross-firing between the boys, the tempting meal was "in due and ancient form" dispatched.

III.

Suspense.

THE mournful night that followed this usual evening meal was long remembered —this night to which at least two persons had looked forward with palpitating interest; this night made memorable by the great electric storm and howling winds; the night hereafter to be recalled by the Fraters with a nervous shock, for in its early hours their father had suddenly expired without immediate warning— and the cheerful fire lighted for the enjoyment of ardent lovers gave forth its sympathetic warmth and cheer to a large company of neighbors who had faced the fierce winds to bring comfort to the bereaved family. Over this night, with its sobs and sighs, its desolated hearts and disappointed hopes, let the mantle of oblivion be thrown, forever to remain. On the following afternoon the pastor conducted an impressive funeral service at the Frater resi-

dence. In the presence of a large company of neighbors Joshua Frater's mortal remains were laid to rest beside the sleeping dust of his faithful wife.

Let us withdraw a twelvemonth from that night which marked the decease of Joshua Frater; that night with its deep agitations refusing to be forgotten, which determined the trend of two human lives fraught with great possibilities. High hopes were brought low, and strange history is to be written.

Martha Frater's meditations ran thus: "O the awful silences of sleepless hours when voices which have been hushed are heard and when familiar forms which have disappeared are seen, and yet they return not! These long nights whose harmonies are pitched on the minor key of the sighing winds—O how trying, how terribly depressing!"

Added to the great loss which Martha felt so keenly was the enforced indefinite suspension of any serious consideration of the grave and interesting question which had been so

vigorously pressed for her solution. She had not yet been able to set herself earnestly to the task of solving this problem; for she had not been able to get away from the effect of the oft-repeated suggestion of her lamented father that she could be a great, binding, and helpful force to her brothers and sister. In fact, she had made no effort to bring herself from under the influence of this suggestion. It was such a strong conviction and desire of her father that they should remain together that it was the line of vivid memory along which she could most easily and closely connect with the past and with him.

Altruism was the key to the character of Martha Frater, and therefore it was not ordinarily impossible for her to forego even her most cherished plans if opportunity for generous and needed service appeared. She had not been able, however, in the swirl of conflicting winds of influence, to hold herself with perfect steadiness of purpose. Swayed alternately by her sincere affection for Hubert drawing her

toward one course and being drawn toward the other course by her deep love for her brothers and sister, for whom she felt parental responsibility, especially with reference to their spiritual guidance and safety, she had not been able to give Hubert the encouragement which would constitute a basis for more than a faint hope of success in his suit. His happiness had been arrested for weary, waiting months, maybe for life, if not for eternity. O what floods of sunshine she could throw upon his individual world if she would only say the one word! Thus far she had steadfastly refrained from saying that word.

This negative fact was a severe blow to Hubert Howard. Martha Frater was his mind's ideal and his heart's idol. His hopes were being crushed and his manly pride humbled. That she loved him truly, he had no good reason to doubt. Endeavoring to sit in impartial judgment upon himself as a desirable matrimonial "chance," he believed that there was no natural reason for his being rejected. He

simply could not understand it. He was inextricably puzzled. To be sure, she had maintained a consistent and circumspect reserve in the discussion of her plans. "What will she do? Is she going to be foolish enough to sacrifice her life merely to help those brothers? They will never appreciate it. They can't appreciate her—her worth—they are not capable of doing so. About all that they live for is money. Of course she can help them get rich; she is doing that. She has better business judgment than any of them or all of them put together. They are simply not in her class at all. No wonder they want her to remain with them merely for their own selfish gains! And just to think that she will waste her great life that they may simply accumulate a fortune! I can't understand how a woman of her intellectual breadth could arrive at such a decision. But somehow or other they seem to be determined to stay together. I guess it's all off. When once she makes up her mind—well, it's no use." With an unusual jerk of impatience

in his voice he closed the remarks which he was addressing to himself by saying: "They are the most clannish set I ever saw. They seem to be held together by bands of steel. It was the old man's doctrine. He was always talking it, and his children were apt pupils, and she fully as apt as the rest. I fear I shall never be able to break into this close corporation. I cannot endure this awful suspense much longer."

IV.

The Christian Brotherhood.

IN the year 1877 the Rev. Thomas Robertson, pastor of the Methodist Church in Lexington, had made substantially the following remarks in his pulpit on the preceding Sunday:

What is that mysterious force which commands the peace among the warring elements of human nature; which subdues moral beasts of pray; that power which induces a man to be at peace with himself and all mankind; that power which is embodied in the sweetest, sublimest, most potent message man ever heard; that power which is signalized by mystery and attested by experience; that magnetic force which draws enemies and aliens into the intimate bonds of brotherhood? It is the "power of God unto salvation"—the sweet, old, ever-new story of the Son of Man, who brought this evangel to our helpless world and charged it with his own omnific Spirit. He gently places his pierced hand on the fierce, wild hearts of

men, saying, "Peace," and there is calm. He poured out his precious life a willing sacrifice to recover men from heathenism to holiness, from barbarism to brotherhood. His purpose to make men spiritual brothers was a consuming passion. He loved and labored, sympathized and suffered to secure it. He threw himself with perfect abandon into the infinite task of building a world-brotherhood. Of all the excellent orders and fraternities which ameliorate the unhappy conditions of human society, the most ennobling and best is the brotherhood of Christianity.

Mr. Nathan Perkins, a prominent young man somewhat removed from the orthodox standards in his manner of thinking, but an attentive and intelligent listener, had heard the sermon and on the first meeting with the pastor said: "Dr. Robertson, I heard your discourse on Sunday with pleasure and interest, but really regret that I cannot compel myself to go as far in my admiration of the Christian brotherhood as you seem able to go. Your tribute to the power of the gospel was strong and beautiful;

but as I think of some of the benevolent and fraternal orders along with Christianity, the former do not seem to suffer by the comparison."

"I am very glad, Mr. Perkins, to have had you as an auditor and to hear any friendly criticism that you may wish to offer; but I fear that you fail to make a note of the fact that nearly, if not quite all, the good there is in the orders to which you refer—and there is much good in them—can be attributed to the influence and power of Christianity. The gospel of Christ has created the atmosphere, prepared the soil, and sent the showers which make possible the growing crops of beneficence existing under various names."

"But, Doctor, it seems to me that in organized charity and brotherly deeds some of these orders surpass the Churches."

"It may appear so in some instances, Mr. Perkins; but the Churches have never been thoroughly organized for the best expression of the spirit they possess. Some may regard

this as a deficiency. They think that if the Christian Church had been completely organized for the fullest expression of its benevolent life, there would have been little or no occasion for the formation of secular orders. But the theory of the Churches has been that they must give that emphasis to the one great duty of preaching the gospel which will concentrate attention upon the supreme importance of spiritual regeneration and eternal life. Possibly it may have been feared that too much organization for social and benevolent ends might defeat this all-important purpose."

"Well, I see your point, Dr. Robertson, and recognize that the distinction you make must be apt, from your viewpoint."

"I think, Mr. Perkins, it is unquestionably true that the finest expression of the altruistic spirit is seen in the lives of true Christians. What non-Christian, for instance, has sufficient scope of interest and sympathy to make personal sacrifices in order that heathen men of other nations may receive benefit?"

"Well, as to that matter, Doctor, I myself do not confess to any enthusiastic interest. I would prefer to spend my mite on nearer neighbors. The wings of the eagle on my dollar are not strong enough to carry it to very distant lands. But my lack of zeal for the salvation of the heathen does not disprove your contention, since I make no claim to being a Christian myself. I perhaps have not fallen under the influence of the mysterious power of which you speak, which binds mankind together in a strong and beautiful brotherhood. I admire your conception. It is attractive. But, Doctor, the proofs of the existence of such an actual fraternity do not appear to me to be convincingly abundant. Do not Christians sometimes exhibit an unbrotherly spirit and perform unbrotherly acts?"

"Yes, Mr. Perkins, sometimes they do, as you suggest. Not all Christians, however, can be thus criticized justly. There are many who earnestly endeavor to live up to the tenets of this great brotherhood and whose success is

sufficiently convincing to prove the reality of my contention. Admitting the mistakes and imperfections of many of those who bear the Christian name, it is still true that Christians manifest more of the spirit of love, forgiveness, mercy, and good will than can be found in any other organization on earth, unless that organization be wholly composed of Christians. The love which existed among the primitive followers of Christ was matter of remark and wonder to outsiders. The same love is manifest in modern times. Africans said of David Livingstone: 'This was the man who loved everybody.' Thousands of self-sacrificing Christians and missionaries are proofs in evidence."

Mr. Perkins closed his part of the dialogue by saying: "Doctor, I am almost persuaded. I admit the cogency of your argument, from which it would seem that kinship on high spiritual lines must be as real and strong as the natural ties which bind mankind together."

"Indeed, I believe they are stronger," re-

plied the preacher. Sin is a great disintegrating element, separating mankind and producing friction and trouble. The only power strong enough to reunite and bind them together is the power of God, called brotherly love."

V.

"United We Stand."

THE late Joshua Frater's business was in perfect condition at the time of his decease. He died intestate. The sons had the details of the affairs of the "Frater firm," as they were sometimes called, well in hand and since having full charge had enlarged the business in some important directions. No written agreement had been signed or even drawn by the three brothers and two sisters. They regarded themselves as a business unit. None of them had had any strong inducements to withdraw from the firm except Martha, and she was still pursuing her daily duties as serenely as the sun mounts above the eastern horizon and as steadily as the Mississippi moves toward the Gulf. As to her future decisions, satisfactory forecasting is difficult; the unfolding of events must determine. She will act conscientiously.

For the male members of this house money-making had a fascination—in fact, it was rapidly becoming a dominant passion. The trend of all their training had been in that direction. The father's teaching and example of energy and success had thoroughly established the sons in the belief that the "chief concern of mortals here below" is to get all you can legitimately and hold what you get. The efforts of their godly sister to lure them to lines of character culture and public-spirited service had seemed unavailing. They were fast becoming slaves of the money-making habit. This controlling passion, too, was meeting with gratification by reason of remarkable success.

The Fraters were a fine business team, with Newt in charge of the mercantile and banking interests, Si looking after the lumber plants, and Joe managing the two plantations, he being also the "cotton man." The Frater brothers had become by great odds the strongest financial concern within a radius of many miles.

Newt had said: "We will just go along and

keep everything together. It is to the advantage of all of us to do so. 'United we stand.' "

Joe remarked: "I know that is what father thought we ought to do. He was always talking it."

But Si rejoined: "That may work out all right, but how will you know what's yours? How will I know what's mine? The day of settlement has got to come sometime."

Joe sneered out: "Settlement nothing! What's the use? What there is is ours. It belongs to us, doesn't it?"

Si replied: "Yes, that all looks mighty nice when we are all well and at work and making money; but suppose some of us should break down or for some reason or other do no good making anything. It wouldn't be fair for the others to 'divvy up' with him equals, would it?"

Newt cross-fired: "Nonsense, Si! Your mouth is running away with your brain tonight. We are all in good health except that Myrtle is sort o' on the complaining list; and

we're not old enough yet to think about quitting or dividing up, if we ever do. I think we had better go right ahead. We're doing mighty well, and that's hard to beat. There's nobody here to hear it but us. We're making more money than anybody in this part of the country by a long shot."

Joe joined in: "Yes, Newt's right about it. What have you to say about it, sister? You're keeping mighty quiet, as usual."

"What have I to say? Well, as to the matter of success, I can see no reason for complaint. On the other hand, there is room for gratitude and gratification. We have been greatly favored by a good Providence. As to the question raised by Si, I would say that, as I see it, the natural bond of brotherhood ought to be sufficient guarantee that each one will do right with all the others. Since you have called me out in this discussion, I shall avail myself of the opportunity to say some other things that I have in mind. While I observe with a measure of gratified interest the success that you boys

are achieving, I confess to a degree of painful solicitude as you seem to become more and more absorbed in the effort to make money. Life means much more than being merely a sphere of activity to accumulate wealth, according to my interpretation. Permit me to suggest, my dear brothers, that you do not reserve any time, practically, from your busy rounds for self-improvement, for spiritual cultivation, or for being public-spirited and useful citizens. And then, if you will pardon me, I will say, further, that I think the idea and practice of economy has been overdone. I do not at all object to the small part I perform in the daily program. I enjoy housekeeping and putting into practice what little knowledge I may have of the culinary art and, as to that matter, running the whole scale of domestic affairs. I expect to make myself as useful as I can; but may I suggest, without being misunderstood, that a number of necessary comforts and conveniences might be procured which would add greatly to the enjoyment of our home? Nei-

ther the house nor the furniture is at all in keeping with the means at command nor with the better-appointed homes about us. A little paint and paper would help out a good deal. And while I am talking I'll say another thing, unless by doing so I shall startle you too much"—

Said Si: "Go ahead, sister, while you're at it. I never saw you on such a rampage before."

She continued: "As I was going to say, I think you are lacking in liberality. You're too close with your money. What is money for but to use? It makes an excellent servant; but once it becomes master, woe be to the slave it dominates! To be more specific, you give very little heed to the cause of benevolence and religion. Father paid much more liberally to these interests than you are doing, and in this regard I suppose he did very well considering his training; but I should so much like to see enlargement in your liberality."

Joe broke in: "She's a pretty good preacher, isn't she?"

Newt made excuse: "O, I guess it's all right for people who are interested in those things to pay in pretty strong; but I'm just so busy that I don't have time to go to church, and I'm not much on paying for what I don't get."

Si chimed in: "That's sorter my ticket, Newt. Sister can go for the rest and then preach it over to us if she can catch us still long enough."

Joe emphasized: "She's a crackerjack of a preacher all right."

"Well, boys," said Newt candidly, "sister has told us the truth. I know we ought to do better, and so do you; but somehow it's hard to get at it."

Martha came again: "The fact that gives me most concern is your retrogression. You are going backward instead of forward. I fear that your financial success has consumed the spirit of liberality."

"Sister," said Si half jestingly, "when we

get rich, we'll do better about paying and maybe praying too; but on this last proposition I wouldn't make any rash promises. We will look to you to round us up once in a while and keep us in the middle of the road."

Martha replied: "That is precisely what I am endeavoring to do now."

Myrtle spoke up: "Well, if you are all through with your preachments and arguments, I think we had better adjourn and get a little sleep."

It was a rare thing for Myrtle to say anything in general conversation. Her father had given her good educational advantages, which she improved only in a moderate degree. Soon after her school days were over, her good looks and vivacity drew to her side an ardent wooer, to whom in due process of time and courtship she became engaged to be married. But, alas! one month before the arrival of the happy day that fell destroyer of human hopes, typhoid fever, swept him from the walks of life and left her henceforth to travel alone the gloomy

path of disappointment. It was now four years since this awful experience came to her. She had never rallied nor apparently made any effort to rally from the severe shock. In a listless, half-hearted manner she met and conquered the small details of daily service which fell to her lot or was conquered by them; and with her it mattered little whether she was the positive or the negative factor. Her sister thought and planned for her largely; in fact, she had become such a negative character that she made very few demands upon any one for anything.

Once more Joe reflected the family sentiment: "Well, we've stood together so far, and that's several years, and I am here thinking that we have done tolerably well. No complaints from this quarter."

Si replied: "So say we all. Good night."

"But," remarked Martha, "before we separate for the night—this is Saturday—let's all promise to attend Church services at the Methodist church to-morrow. It is a special occa-

sion, and I am sure that you'll be interested. I learn that some visitor is to fill the pulpit."

Said Si lightly: "I have not been to church in so long that I wouldn't know how to behave."

Joe made excuse: "I had a little trip planned for to-morrow. I don't think I can go."

Newt proposed: "Well, I have neglected going till I'm ashamed of it. Let's all go with sister one time, anyway."

Si replied: "Well, we'll see in the morning."

Joe said agreeingly: "Sleep on it and see what sort of dreams we have. I'm starting to dreamland right now."

VI.

A Special Occasion.

BEFORE the Sunday school teachers had finished with their classes, the people began assembling for the eleven o'clock service; for the ideal condition in which all church attendants should be in Sunday school and all Sunday school pupils should remain for the preaching service had not yet obtained in the Lexington Church. The announcement made the preceding Sunday by the pastor, the Rev. Porter Phillips, and published in the town papers, that there would be an occasion of unusual interest, with an address by a visiting gentleman from the West, had excited some curiosity and increased the audience by the time the speaker began to the capacity of the large auditorium.

Miss Martha Frater's class of young ladies wondered what could be the matter that she was absent. "She never misses," one re-

marked, "when she is well." While yet remaining in the classes, Nettie Markham asked Mr. Curtis, the teacher of the class of young ladies: "What is the special occasion to be, Mr. Curtis? Brother Phillips did not say in his announcement last Sunday." Mr. Curtis replied that he had not heard anything more than that there would be an address delivered by a visiting layman, who is said to be an able speaker. As to his theme, he had not been advised.

Susie Pointer whispered to Lucy Lowman: "Just look at the people pouring in! See how many strangers! Well, I wish you would tell me, whoever can that be with Miss Martha Frater?"

"Well, as I live, if those are not her brothers!" said Lucy. "Who ever saw them at church? I reckon this is going to be a big occasion sure enough to draw them out."

"I thought they looked like the Fraters," replied Susie, "but I didn't think they ever went to church."

The organ voluntary pealed forth its solemn and restful music as the pastor and visiting brother came onto the pulpit from the pastor's study in the rear. Very few in the audience recognized the visitor. Martha Frater looked intently a moment, flushed slightly, and moved nervously in her seat. Her brothers stared at the man as though he had just arrived in an ethereal machine from the moon. The visitor had good command of himself, but seemed completely absorbed as he glanced over the crowd. When his gaze reached a certain section in the audience, it became fixed.

The pastor had charge of all preliminaries, which were brief and pertinent. As the last hymn before the introduction was being sung, the pastor's face was a study. Did it reveal more of complacency or of anxiety? of satisfaction or of doubt? As the "amen" of the hymn died away the pastor arose and said:

The members of my congregation are aware that I have been endeavoring to furnish from time to time through well-qualified men funda-

mental and practical instruction on the settled policies of our Church; and it affords me no ordinary gratification to announce as our speaker to-day a gentleman and brother whom some of you may remember, as he was once a resident of this city. In very recent years he has become deeply interested in religious matters and has frequently been the speaker on great occasions in his adopted home in the West. Sometime ago we had an address on "Missions," later an able presentation of the subject of "Church Extension." To-day we shall be favored with an address on "The Value of the Christian Ministry and Its Proper Support." I have the very great pleasure of introducing Brother Hubert Howard, who will now address you.

Mr. Howard stepped quietly and firmly forward, looking every inch a man, and his moral manhood was as great in measurement as was his physical. He began:

My Friends: I confess to a large degree of pleasure, as well as a consciousness of incompetency, in returning to my former home, after an absence of several years, in the capacity of

a public talker. For some time past I have regarded the contribution of my personal service in Church enterprises as both a duty and a privilege. I think it cause for sincere regret that such a small per cent of our laymen assume activity in the great propaganda of the Church. The importance of the theme announced it would be difficult to exaggerate without resorting to the use of extravagant language. As Brother Phillips has already told you, I am to say something on "The Value of the Christian Ministry and Its Proper Support." The reasons for my having undertaken to make special preparation on the subject announced are, in the first place, its prime importance, and, in the second place, because it is a subject which a minister cannot discuss freely and unembarrassed as can a layman.

And so Mr. Howard launched forth in the treatment of his subject. Without being able to make full report of all he said, the following fragments will give some idea of the trend of the discourse and of the earnestness of the speaker. He said:

The work of the minister of the gospel is fundamentally necessary to the safety, peace, and prosperity of society at large. Of all public servants, there are none to whom the people owe a deeper debt of gratitude or more liberal moral and material support. The preacher belongs to the public. He is everybody's man. Any case of real need may command his time and strength. He is normally a molder of public sentiment and a leader in thought. What is more important still, he stimulates the making of character; and so his work abides. He contributes to the development of Christian civilization and is a nation builder to the extent that he aids in making good citizens and good patriots. One of our Church historians refers to a pioneer Methodist as "one of the saddlebags men to whom Western civilization is more indebted than to any other class of agents."

The preacher is also an influential factor in the development of material values and the increase of wealth; for as he preaches the gospel he touches life at every vital point — in the home, in social, political, and business life — and quickens activity in all legitimate interests. While the preacher is not a direct producer of

wealth, it cannot escape the notice of the thoughtful student of society that he has exerted, either directly or indirectly, tremendous influence upon material values and business prosperity. In a very vital sense he has helped to create our civilization and our wealth, and hence every principle of equity is involved in his comfortable support. And in the clear light of justice this principle must apply to the entire life of the minister, in age and retirement as well as when leading the hosts to victory; for his consecration to this sacred calling is for life.

Moreover, he is the confidential friend of those who bring to him their heart burdens, the adviser and helper of lonely widows and dependent orphans. In the great and trying crises of their lives he is close to the people. He is present to pronounce his blessing and extend his congratulations on the festive marriage occasion. He is never wanting when serious illness intrudes upon his community. Even when the last enemy makes relentless invasion he is present with tender and sympathetic words, cheering and comforting those who sit in the painful silences.

His hand is upon the young for guidance—

in the home, in the Sunday school, in the young people's meetings, in the day school—everywhere. He is offered as a daily sacrifice on the altar of service. Not only is heavy draft made upon his time and energy, but also upon his responsive sympathy. Heavy tribute is laid upon the very sinews of his life. So, upon the most casual observation, one cannot avoid seeing that the community at large is deeply indebted to the minister of the gospel as the most valuable public servant in their midst, since he aids the people in obtaining the things which are imperishable, the eternal verities for which alone it is worth while to live and worthy to die.

But if we consider the larger community under such a debt of obligation to the preacher, how much more is the Christian denomination, which approves and commands his service, time, strength, and life, under solemn bond to sustain him morally and guarantee to him and his dependents comfortable support during life or the period of need!

More especially are those Churches under such obligation which have the itinerant system, as has our Methodist Church, because, while this system is very effective, it makes more

serious exactions upon its ministry than do the settled pastorates. Frequent and long moves and the small salaries of the great majority of itinerants render it impossible for them to provide against the inevitable want which is incident to age or illness. The itinerancy is a great system for searching out and serving the people in all the nooks and corners of the land, but none need enter this service except true heroes.

The itinerant surrenders at once the right to choose his field of labor and to name the salary for which he is to work. Often the pay is gravely insufficient to meet the modest demands. And I cannot forbear in this connection to say, with reference to the wives of the preachers, that if there is any difference in the manner of their meeting these exigent conditions, the heroine is often greater than the hero.

But the most pitiful aspect of the entire subject, as I view it, is that which relates to the preacher in retirement. At the very time the regular salary ceases, the superannuate, with increasing infirmities, is reduced to a gratuity and often to a pittance. The allowance being inadequate to meet actual necessities, it becomes a question of the old man or the wid-

ow seeking and performing some humble service on small pay or of further cutting down the already meager supplies. As a rule, they will not complain, but they can suffer. I am thankful to believe, however, that in regard to their comfort a brighter day is dawning. We shall do a better part henceforth by the veterans of the cross. The Church is awaking to this great task. May the day of its completion soon shed its welcome light upon us!

The speaker closed his remarks in a peroration complimentary to the heroic and unselfish lives of the itinerant preachers and their wives, so forceful and eloquent that the great audience listened with almost breathless attention. Mr. Howard resumed his seat. The pastor arose and said: "I feel that we owe a great debt of gratitude to Brother Howard for this able address, and I wish to thank him out of the depths of my heart for the message he has brought. I feel sure that this audience would like to join me in this expression. If so, you may stand." Promptly and unanimously they arose. "Please remain standing and sing:

"'Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.'"

The hymn ended, the pastor said the benediction. The people pressed forward to the pulpit to shake hands with the speaker and thank him.

Mr. Spencer, Chairman of the Official Board of the Church, said: "Brother Howard, I want to thank you. You have enlightened me upon this important subject. I have been ignorant of many facts that you have given us. Never before have I seen just how poorly our superannuated preachers and the widows and orphans have been provided for and how strongly the obligation of their support rests upon us." Many others made similar comments.

Miss Martha Frater came with the throng to greet the speaker. For once she was perceptibly nervous and without her usual self-composure. Mr. Howard saw this and also perceived that she had greatly changed in appearance. She seemed much older, thinner, and paler. He peered into her face a moment, and

his intense gaze suddenly changed into a look of pathos. "Mr. Howard," she said, "I am as glad as I am surprised to see and hear you to-day. In all my dreams I have never dreamed of hearing you speak in a church. You have evidently given much study to the subject. You have informed and inspired me. I wish to express my appreciation of your address."

Mr. Howard replied: "Miss Martha, I thank you. It is worth while for me to have made the effort if I have your favorable judgment."

She thanked him and replied: "I hope to see you again and inquire how you are getting on in your far-away Western home. It seems such a long time since you went away! I cannot recover from the surprise at your coming, and, I was about to say, coming in the capacity of a preacher."

"Well, they do sometimes call me a lay preacher at home. I shall see you again before going. There are many strangers here to-day."

After the Fraters returned home, they fin-

ished a running conversation that they had carried on along the way about the service.

Joe said: "That man certainly is some talker, and I never was so surprised in my life as when I heard Hubert Howard speaking like that."

"Surprised? I guess you was," Si added. "I never expected to see him again, let alone hear him speak. But I want to tell you he made me think just a little and feel kind o' solemnlike too."

"Of course everybody was surprised to see him," added Newt. "He's changed a whole lot; but he's a good talker, anyway. I'll have to hand him that. It's a shame about the old preachers, isn't it? I'm certainly sorry for them. Is Dr. Robertson superannuated?"

"Yes," answered Martha; "he broke down about five years ago."

Si queried: "Sister, is Hubert Howard married?"

"O yes, long ago, I understand," answered Martha. She hastened to add: "Mr. Howard

is a very impressive and able speaker. He also had an interesting subject, and he treated his unusual theme in a most attractive manner. He certainly made it clear that the indebtedness to the ministry is great and that much of the indebtedness remains undischarged. I'm sure that his address will awaken interest for the superannuated preachers and the widows and children. It was great."

The current of the River of Time had borne Hubert Howard, Martha Frater, and the rest far toward the ocean of eternity since last they had met. Silver threads had appeared among the gold, but Martha was still a beautiful woman. On her pale, refined face could be traced only the spiritual, the noblest, and the best. Many a time afterwards reference was made to this occasion and to Hubert Howard's great speech.

VII.

The Subtle Sin of Neglect.

MANHOOD'S midday sun had already shone upon the youngest of the Frater brothers, while Newt and Si had entered that indefinable area of time called the prime of life. They all appeared to be older than they were. They had been hard and constant workers. Business was a serious affair with them and recreation a stranger. The vital forces held constantly on the revolving grindstone of hard mental and physical labor for seven days in the week had worn away every semblance of youth, and deep-furrowed care was settling upon their wrinkled brows. Even the pleasant little jests of former times were now extremely rare. When they talked with each other, they talked of business and nothing else. They held frequent counsel as to their plans and exchanged experiences. One thing could still light up their faces to radiance, and that one

thing was financial success. A great coil of covetousness had wrapped itself around their nobler manhood until they no longer had freedom of action. They were the overworked slaves of prosperity. Rapidly were they becoming atrophied under the influence of the mercantile temper of the times, of which they were prominent exponents.

The recitation of the foregoing facts has already prepared the reader in a measure for a glance into the Frater home. The furnishing was extremely plain, but scrupulously neat and clean. Martha had always contributed more than her share toward home comfort. Without making herself unpleasantly insistent, which, in fact, her unselfishness would not permit, she had been unable to have such a home as she felt they could well afford and the æsthetic effect of which she saw more and more was sorely needed. More recently, however, there was a perceptible decline in the usual neat appearance of things. This had come about within the past two years. Soon after the

great occasion of Hubert Howard's visit and able address Martha Frater suffered a serious nervous collapse and became utterly unable to look after the keeping of the home; and so, with Myrtle's continued listless state of mind, the hiring of a servant became compulsory, and a third-rate colored cook and housegirl combined was employed. No one can tell, and Martha Frater will never disclose, the torture of her fine sensibilities under these trying conditions. She had her own private room, which had always been noted for neatness and good taste. Now that she was unable to care for the room to which she was confined, it was dusty and unattractive because, as she said, "Aunt Sally just will not dust and tidy things up as I should like."

The brothers were never positively unkind to their sister—that is, they did not mean to be unkind. They thought that she was the greatest one living. They knew her unselfishness. They had every reason to know that she had deliberately crucified a great affection and de-

nied herself of her heart's great longing that she might help them and keep things together. She could have shared the great success and honor which had been achieved by the man who would have given anything possible to have possessed her. She might have been Mrs. Hubert Howard, happily presiding with grace and tact in one of the most beautiful mansions in the great West. They knew all this, if they would only allow themselves to reflect.

But they were not given to reflection upon lines which did not converge directly upon their own selfish ambitions. It was all very well that she had materially aided them in accumulating a fortune. They had always treated her suggestions about home improvements and home comforts jestingly and "laughed them out of court." It had not dawned upon them that they owed her a great debt which, do what they might, they would never be able to discharge. The thought that they were sadly neglecting her now in her physical decline and loneliness had not emerged through

the manifold incrustations of covetousness which enveloped their sordid brains.

Yes, that was the real and exact status of the case. These serious facts had not occurred to them. They were simply preoccupied with business. They were carrying out to the letter the popular program of the materialistic times in which they lived—namely, the objective toward which all human endeavor should move is a fortune. They were obsessed with the common error that wealth can secure happiness. Strange was it, indeed, that the suggestion did not creep along the natural lines of brotherhood which had held them together all the years and say: "Men, your neglect is driving a dagger through the heart of your noble, unselfish sister." No one ever heard her utter a word of complaint with reference to her treatment.

But the neighbors talked. Of course they did. This was altogether too good an opportunity for one to express one's opinion to let pass unimproved.

Mrs. Jones, wife of one of the stewards of

the Church, said: "I think it is a shame and a lasting disgrace to those Frater men that they neglect their sister as they do. She is the finest character I ever knew and really a great woman."

Mrs. Epperson replied: "It is the strangest and most unaccountable thing of the kind I ever knew of or heard about. Martha Frater has lived largely for them. She threw away as fine prospects as a young woman ever had, and all for them; and they have never shared with her properly the success which she has helped them to achieve. And now for the last year or two her case is simply pitiful."

Said Mrs. Jones: "It is the strangest thing. They do not seem to know that they are neglecting her. What is the matter with them? Just gone mad after money, I suppose, and don't realize it."

Mrs. Epperson suggested: "Yes, and there is another sad phase of the matter too; and that is, Martha has lived such a noble life before them and has tried so hard to get them to

be religious and to be broad-minded and public-spirited citizens and, as far as I can see, has utterly failed. Why, I think that is really what is killing her by degrees."

"And poor Myrtle, helpless thing," added Mrs. Jones, "is no comfort or help to anybody; and the brothers come home only to sleep, eat a late supper and an early breakfast, and go again. O, if they would only stop long enough to think a little! What will they do with all their money, anyway? It's a sin and a burning shame the way they are treating their sister."

Martha Frater had much time for reflection. Only once was she ever heard to say anything. Being much alone for such a long period, she sometimes thought aloud to herself. And so it happened that one warm afternoon Mrs. Susie Pointer White had gone to see her and, coming softly near the door, which was ajar, and hearing a voice within, it flashed over her that Martha was praying, and she must not intrude. She stood still. "No, she must be talking confidentially to some one. What shall

I do?" She turned to go; and, hearing a footfall, Martha said: "Come in. O, it is my dear little friend Susie! I am so glad to see you."

"How are you, Miss Martha? I am so glad I can come and see you. It is one of my greatest privileges."

"Well, my dear, you doubtless heard me talking to myself. I sometimes feel as if I should succumb to sheer loneliness; and I must talk, if only to myself. I try never to complain at my lot, not even in my feelings; but you know, dear, I just wear out thinking, thinking. If you will pardon me for imposing my burdens on your dear self, I will talk on to you as if I were talking to myself, for my heart burdens are heavy. I was saying that maybe, after all, it is my fault that my dear brothers are not strong Christian characters."

"No, Miss Martha, I cannot bear for you to intimate such failure on your part. Every one knows that you have done your duty."

"It is my greatest disappointment that they are wholly engrossed in business and that I

have not seen them the useful and active Christians I hoped to see. With the passing of the years they seem to have become more and more fascinated with the money-making game and really do not stop to consider their own well-being nor that of other people. I would not have you think that they are not good to me. I believe I have their sincere brotherly affection; but if they could only spare some time, if they would only lend themselves to me, so that I might enjoy them! But, sadly, business takes precedence. I could joyfully lay down my poor life to see them saved. I am often puzzled, dear, in my little meditation. I cannot understand. I could freely lay down my life for them and my dear sister if it should be the Divine will, and I wonder whether this feeling is inspired more by the natural bond of brotherhood or by the purely Christian impulse. You know, Susie, the question is often seriously raised in my mind, Are not the ties of spiritual brotherhood stronger, after all, than the natural ties of kinship? I cannot decide about this as to

myself, not being able to draw the line between my natural and my spiritual impulses; but observation and reflection have brought me to the point of accepting the view that 'the Christian brotherhood is the greatest on earth and ranks all others.' I have been forced to the conclusion that the natural ties of brotherhood are not a perfect guarantee."

"O, Miss Martha, you raise such interesting questions," said Mrs. White, "and your opinions seem so satisfactory to me! I dearly love to hear you talk. I have had such a delightful hour with you! I thank you too; but I must go. Good-by."

"Good-by, Susie. Your visit brought sunshine and cheer. I thank you so much. Please come again soon."

After Mrs. White had gone, Martha repeated to herself the beautiful words she often quoted:

"I live for those who love me,
For those whose hearts are true,
For the heaven that smiles above me
And awaits my spirit too;

For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the cause that needs assistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do."

As Mrs. White was on her way home from her visit to Martha she met the Rev. W. B. Lloyd, her pastor, and related to him the conversation which had just occurred. He expressed surprise that Miss Martha had talked so freely. He had never before heard of her referring to the family affairs nor even to her loneliness. He added: "She is one of the most unselfish persons I ever knew."

"She is all but perfection itself," said Mrs. White.

VIII.

Justice versus Brotherly Love.

THE sin of neglect is not confined to the natural brotherhood. The spiritual brotherhood is also seriously involved. Anchored near the Island of Helplessness, with meager supplies aboard, brave old preachers, heroic widows, and dependent children watch the ships go by. Relief vessels make few visits. When they come, they issue "allowances," and the allowances do not hold out. So deplorable is their situation that voices from the eternities are heard in their behalf.

Justice crieth for their relief, but her cries are muffled. In firm and solemn voice she is heard to speak thus: "I plead for fairness everywhere and in behalf of every one. It is right for the able-bodied and the strong in every place to aid the weak and the aged. Pensions are founded and maintained by my sanction. The principle is right, and the cus-

tom will become universal. How soon I cannot say. My decree is delayed. At the present moment I speak of those having special claims and special rights. I recognize all public servants in one great class, but now refer particularly to those who have wrought under conscientious compulsion for underpay. It is not right for the public to accept needed service without reasonable remuneration being made to the public servant. Not intending to make invidious distinction, which, in fact, I cannot do," said the voice of Justice, "I will consider the vocation of the Christian minister and the support accorded him. A great standing army of 'good soldiers of the Lord Jesus' have endured hard conditions, and will continue to do so. The Christian minister's is the highest form of public service rendered. The responsibility attending it is much weightier than in other callings. Necessarily, strong demands are made on the minister's vital forces; nor is compensation for this high service to be compared with that of other vocations, only to suf-

fer by the comparison. The average salary of the ministers of the gospel is the smallest of all professions, while the importance and value of their work is greatest to the public. I demand for them better things," said Justice, "for I have witnessed the severe exactions made upon their slim salaries. They must often set the pace of liberality in benevolence and charity. The demands upon them for apparel for themselves and families and the necessary outlay for books and literature are out of proportion to the amount of money placed at their disposal. They must walk in front of the procession and be costumed and panoplied to lead. Then I know, furthermore," said Justice, "that frequent and extraordinary demands are made upon their limited resources and that their readiness to respond often embarrasses their ability to pay. That they get on at all without bringing reproach upon their high calling may well challenge the attention and generous respect of all observers."

Brotherly Love made answer, saying: "Jus-

tice, you are highly complimentary to that body of people constituted and empowered by my bond and blessing, 'the greatest brotherhood on earth.' The perfect brotherhood was the ideal toward which the blessed Lord wrought and that for which he gave himself in incessant toil and to attain which he at last became a willing sacrifice. Being Justice, as you are, I know that you always speak the truth. I must confess, however, that I had not observed some facts to which you direct attention. I have seen the devotion of ministers of the gospel, have witnessed their self-abnegation, and have urged them on. I did not see, I confess, many of the difficulties in their lives which you have plainly pointed out. I was absorbed with the thought of their success and glorious achievement. I am sure that I possessed and controlled them so completely that they themselves often forgot the trials and self-denials along the way. So it is, and so it must always be. If there is to be a heroic ministry, I must incite them and hearten them. I must blind them to circum-

stances, so that they may walk by faith; and faith works by love—that is, by my power. I must hold them in hard training for efficiency. I must keep up their courage, so that they will charge and capture strong fortifications of the enemy and yet count these things privileges rather than hardships. I must so completely possess them that they will not stop by the way to number their trials or ponder their poverty or even dwell on their successes. Otherwise they might 'become weary in well-doing.' I thank you, Justice, for speaking in behalf of my chosen band; only do not detain them too frequently or too long to reckon the cost of their sacrifices or to study their situation in the white light of your radiance."

"I am willing that you should speak, Brotherly Love, for ideally there is no difference between us. It must be recognized, however, that the ideal state has not yet obtained in the brotherhood; for the members are not wholly governed by Justice nor always moved by Brotherly Love. I approve all you have

said concerning the devotion and sacrifices incident to the work of the Christian ministry. My strictures do not apply to the servants, but to those whom they serve. Let the preacher forget everything but his work. He may forget his salary, if his grocer will allow. If possible, he may occasionally forget that his dear wife is turning and making over an old dress for the second time. He may forget the fact that his children are subjected to the gibes of their companions until they almost blush blood. He may, like the great apostle, 'count all things but refuse that he may please Christ.' But I, Justice, say that the preacher's interest in the people's well-being, deepened to absorption and utter abandonment, should bring them to reflection and to action in his behalf. Indulge me yet a little further. The service of the gospel minister extends to the end of his days. His consecration is coextensive with his life. I therefore assert as a just principle that life service should have the consideration of life support. Since the salaries of the ministers

are rarely liberal, often meager, and sometimes parsimonious, special provisions for the aged and dependent are necessary to safeguard their comfort. I, Justice, make bold to speak for them. I have witnessed the wrongs they have suffered. They have submitted in silence. I have seen hundreds and thousands of as worthy souls as ever wrought for the welfare of humanity in the autumn of their lives and in the grip of infirmities go hungry for proper food and destitute of decent apparel. Not because they were ostracized or intentionally pauperized. They were only overlooked, neglected. There is no excuse for this existing state of facts. Responsible bodies which have the power and resources should gratefully and gladly provide for the comfortable maintenance of their own chosen and well-beloved servants retired and no longer equal to the burdens of the ministry. To fail at this point is unjust, and such failure constitutes a flaw in the ethics of the great Christian brotherhood. It is a sad comment, Brotherly Love, on your influence

and your applied power. The Word saith: 'Whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him?' If he love God, he will also love the brethren; and if he love the brethren, how can he withhold from them when in need?"

"Ah! noble Justice, you speak aptly. Those who submit to my gentle leading will not forget the needy; especially will they not be indifferent to those lofty souls who have given their lives in unselfish service. How can a true lover of the Lord be careless toward his Lord's special friends? I, Brotherly Love, stand for brotherly care and brotherly support."

Assentingly Justice said: "Now you talk in my terms. I sanction what you say. I perceive that the Christian brotherhood is not free from just criticism with reference to the care of its aged ministers."

"May I suggest, Justice, that I cannot see how this great body of spiritual brothers could

be guilty of neglect toward their spiritual fathers and the widows and dependent children of those who gave their lives as willing offerings on the altar of service? Is it true, is it possible that they have willfully neglected them?"

Justice made reply: "I will not say that the neglect was willful. It was inadvertent or indifferent. One might possibly catch the quick step of the moving columns of a progressive Church and, under the enkindling enthusiasm of her enterprises, leave behind, out of mind and out of plan for a time, the dependent, the disabled, and the veterans. I observe with pleasure evident improvement in the purposes and efforts of the brotherhood. I demand for all dependents better things. I, Justice, will not sleep until they be provided."

Brotherly Love answered: "Can I say less? Nay, verily."

IX.

"A Corn of Wheat."

MARTHA FRATER continued ill with no perceptible improvement, although for many weeks she had been attended by that skillful physician, Dr. James Callender, of Lexington. The case had not responded to treatment. The most that he would say in reply to numerous inquiries was that it was a persistent and stubborn decline attended with symptoms of anæmia. The most exhaustive diagnosis did not reveal any active disease. In reply to the physician's questions Martha would only say: "I am just tired and have such a weary, depressed feeling. No, I do not suffer positive pain; only the awfully uneasy feeling of exhaustion."

The brothers became greatly alarmed over her condition. They were doing all they could now do and were in deep distress. They had Dr. Callender call consulting physicians, but

they advanced no new opinions about the case. The best-trained nurse was employed. Martha had a host of friends who were extremely attentive and greatly alarmed over her constant decline. Many called to make inquiries, but no visitors were allowed to see her. Dr. Callender was well up in his profession, a man in middle life, honest, and showed great kindness to his patients. He was looked upon as a highly respectable gentleman, but did not claim to be a Christian.

It had been several days since Martha had seen any of her friends when she said: "Dr. Callender, I am anxious to see some of my friends. Will you not let them come in?"

"I fear that it might not be well for you, Miss Martha. You will have to conserve your strength. I fear that company might excite your nerves too much."

"Doctor, it seems to me that my nerves have all disappeared. I think I would be relieved if I could feel them tingle again. I think I know my condition. I realize, as doubtless

you do, that my time is brief. I'm not afraid, Doctor. There's nothing to excite me now. I must see some of my friends. I know you are too kind to deny me this small request. I promise you that I will be calm. You can remain if you like when they come."

"Whom do you wish to see, Miss Martha? Maybe one or two might see you a little while."

"I want to see Mrs. White, Mrs. Epperson, and my pastor, Brother Lloyd; and I would so much love to see Dr. Robertson, but he is not able to come."

"Well, I will arrange that for you, Miss Martha."

As Dr. Callender was leaving the Frater home Newt called him aside for a close talk about his sister's condition. "Doctor, what do you think of the case now? Is there any change for the better? I want you to tell me exactly what you think."

"Well, Newt, there's no perceptible change either way, except she is a little weaker than she was yesterday."

"Doctor, do you think there is any chance at all for her?"

"I never give up as long as there is life, but her chances for recovery are exceedingly small. She requested me awhile ago to allow her pastor, Mrs. White, and Mrs. Epperson to see her, and I consented."

"Why, Doctor, don't you think that might make her worse?"

The doctor replied: "No; I think it will do no harm, and I told her that they could come. Of course not all at once. We must be cautious about it. You can let them know one at a time."

"Doctor, if you are sure it won't make her worse. I'm worried to death about her. Is there anything more that can be done?"

"I think not, Newt. It is a complicated and stubborn case in which mental depression cuts a large figure. In fact, I suspect that the cause of her breakdown was over-mental tension of some kind. You know that she always had a very active mind, and for a long time

she has not taken sufficient nourishment to keep up the requisite supply of red blood. Newt, has she ever worried much over anything that you know of?"

"Well, as to fretting about anything, Doctor, she's never been a person to do that." Newt answered no further; but a small suggestion had crept into his mind along with the doctor's question which startled him, but he said nothing about it. He would think more about that.

"I have this much I will say before going. Your sister is extremely ill. I see but very little chance for her recovery. We will do all we can consistently for her comfort and to gratify her wishes. You might step over and let Mrs. Epperson come and see her this evening just a few minutes. She wishes to see her. Good evening, Newt."

"Good-by, Doctor."

By this time Newt was as restless as a polar bear. He wanted to do something, but did not know what to do. He was glad that Dr.

Callender had made the suggestion to go for Mrs. Epperson, so he lost no time in going.

Mrs. Epperson came at once. Martha received her with a radiant smile which betokened her deep joy. Mrs. Epperson was greatly wrought up in her feelings over the rapid decline since she had seen her, but tried to appear cheerful. She said: "I came to see you just the shortest little while. The doctor says that I can't stay long."

"I am so glad you came, Mrs. Epperson. I know well what is coming. I'm resigned to the Father's will, whatever it is. I make one request of you, and I know that you will not deny me. If I go soon, before I see my poor brothers saved, won't you and Susie and Brother Lloyd pray for them till they come in? Maybe they will yet change. How happy I should be to know it! I have lived for them, and sometimes I think I am dying for them. Who knows?"

"Martha, I know that Susie and Brother Lloyd will join me, and I can assure you that

we will do our best to comply with your request. Martha, I would love to talk longer, but I am admonished that I must not now. I'll see you soon. Good-by."

"I thank you so much for coming and for promising me. I'll be happier for it. Good-by."

The trained nurse, Miss Templeton, was deeply impressed with the conversation.

The next morning at nine o'clock Dr. Callender came. He was glad to see that his patient had held up so well and told her so. She replied: "Yes, Doctor, I rested better last night. Mrs. Epperson's visit did me so much good. My mind is somewhat relieved. She promised that she would get Susie and Brother Lloyd to join her in praying for my poor brothers until they are saved."

"Well, Miss Martha, they'll come around all right," returned the doctor; for he was now walking on ground where he was not quite sure of his feet.

Her reference to her brothers strengthened

the clue that the doctor thought he had. Then his thoughts flashed out into psychological speculation a moment: "What influence could the mental state possibly have in breaking down a strong physique?"

Martha recalled him to the practical by saying: "Doctor, in spite of heavy mental burdens I've had to carry, I'm so peaceful this morning. I feel so happy. The Lord doeth all things well." As she thus talked so quietly in a low voice and measured words her face was aglow with an unearthly light.

The doctor was profoundly moved by what he saw and heard. He had never before seen so much of heaven in a human countenance. As he went away he thought: "That good woman is possessed by some sort of divine power. Wonderful! Wonderful!" All day long at intervals the scene was thrown back upon the screen of his memory. He could not get away from it. "Surely she must be very near heaven to have so much of its light flashed upon her face," he said aloud to himself.

At eleven o'clock Brother Lloyd came. Martha expressed great joy in her face at his coming. They exchanged greetings. Just at that moment Mrs. Susie White came. Martha was so much exhausted that she could scarcely be heard. Brother Lloyd gave her to understand that he and Mrs. White had entered into a prayer pact with Mrs. Epperson. Martha seemed overjoyed. She said: "Surely God will hear and answer. I believe it. 'Faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen.' Susie, I'm so happy to see you again."

Warned that their call should be brief, Brother Lloyd, after saying a few comforting words, arose to go. At Martha's request he prayed. The prayer was short, pointed, unctuous. When they left, Martha was in a state of quiet ecstasy.

Early in the afternoon Martha told her nurse that she wanted to talk with her brothers and sister all together. It was easily arranged. In a short while they came. They all seemed to realize that it was the final meeting for the

family group. Martha had rallied and seemed much stronger. Her voice could now be heard distinctly. As he came to her bedside Newt asked: "How are you feeling, sister?"

She talked slowly: "I'm not suffering now and feel better. I wanted to see you all together once more. How sorry I am to leave you, God only knows. O, if I could only be assured that we will take up the thread of life together beyond the mysterious river, I could leave you so much easier! I know that the blessed Saviour is with me and all is well with my poor soul. I feel so unworthy, and yet I have tried to do my duty."

"O sister, we all know that you have done more than your part," said Myrtle.

"No, child; I could not have done more than my duty. I have tried to please my Saviour and to live for others. It didn't matter with me so much about what I wanted or did not want if I could only help other people."

"We know, sister, that you have lived a lot more for us than you have for yourself. I am

beginning to see that now as I never did before. Martha, we boys haven't treated you right." In broken voice Newt continued: "I see it. O, I see it now! It's too late to do any good. But O, sister, won't you forgive us? O, if I could only go back and live it over again, I'd do it differently."

"That part of it is all right, brother. Don't worry over that. If you will only be good Christians, all of you, that will repay me a thousand times over for any little sacrifices I have made."

Si asked: "Sister, do you reckon the Lord could forgive a poor hard-hearted set like we are?"

"O Silas, he will gladly forgive if you will surrender your lives to him."

"Well, I don't hardly see how he can," said Joe. "Sister, won't you ask him to?"

They were all quietly weeping except Martha, who was as calm and serene as a fair May morning. Between sobs Newt got sufficient control of himself to say: "Sister, for the last

day or two I have seen that we have almost murdered you by our careless and wicked ways, and it's about to kill me. Can you forgive us?"

"O, my dear Newton, I have nothing but love for you all. There is nothing for me to forgive. If my death could be used to accomplish what my life has failed to do, it would be glorious to die. Only tell me that you will all be good Christians and meet me in heaven, and then I can be released and walk down into the valley, which is already lighted up for my going." They all promised. "Your faces look so beautiful to me, as if it were heaven's light upon you."

By this time Martha's mite of remaining strength had ebbed out, and she ceased to talk. Her face shone "as it had been the face of an angel." Her brilliant brown eyes gradually closed. The silence was awful. Only her breathing could be heard. Not even the nurse dared to stir. All in the room felt that they

ought to be able to see a heavenly messenger bending over her bed.

In a few minutes the doctor came. Martha was sleeping deeply. He did not arouse her. As he went away he answered Joe's question: "She will hardly get through the night."

The pastor and other friends came in after supper and waited anxiously until the end came, at midnight. She is never to see another sunrise, but henceforth will have "no need of the sun." This was on Friday night.

The funeral service was held at the church the next Sunday at 2:30 P.M. by her pastor, the Rev. W. B. Lloyd. There was a large gathering of the people, for Martha Frater had a stronger hold on public esteem than any other woman in Lexington. A small group of colored people were standing by a window of the church, on the outside. Aunt Sally, who had been so long at the Frater home, with tears running down her black cheeks, said: "Miss Martha was sho' de bes' woman ever I seed or hearn tell uv. Lordy, how I'll miss her!

She done gone right straight up to heaven. Dey ain't no other place for her to go to."

One of the others responded: "Ain't dat de truth?"

Martha had requested her pastor two weeks before her death to have a very simple service, saying: "I do not feel worthy of any sort of eulogy."

As Newt and Myrtle, then Si and Joe, followed the flower-covered casket down the aisle of the church they appeared as though they were going to their own funerals. There was no weeping. They seemed to be in the grasp of despair. Flowers covered the chancel. The music was sweet and appropriate. At the time for the pastor to speak, with evident but suppressed emotion he said:

The presence of this immense company is itself a strong and beautiful tribute to the memory of the good woman who has been taken from our midst. I am under the restraint of her own request that this service must be simple and brief. She said that she felt unworthy of

any extended eulogy. In this request was manifested her strongest trait, self-effacement. Her beautiful life, good deeds, and charming spirit are well known to this people. Often have I heard it remarked of her that she was the most unselfish of persons. Her ideals were lofty, her noble purposes unchanging, and her efforts to do good incessant. What splendid work she did for our young people in her long service as a Sunday school teacher and for some time as President of the Epworth League! Like all earnest Christians, she did not see the full fruitage of her labors and longings. "She hath done what she could."

Her vicarious life has made its impress upon all who came within the circle of her influence. Her humble and holy ambition was to do good as far as she had opportunity. Naturally and properly, her concern was intensified for her own kindred. How strikingly did she say in her last conversation, "If my death could be used to accomplish what my life has failed to do, it would be glorious to die"! Who can tell whether her impressive illness and death may not accomplish great things? May her deferred hopes yet be realized! Her example

was worthy of our imitation. "She rests from her labors, and her works do follow her." The bereaved brothers and sister have our sincere sympathy and prayers.

In the presence of a large company of friends, with simple service, sweet singing, and a profusion of beautiful flowers, they gave her weary body to the embraces of the sweet sleep of the Christian in Mount Hope Cemetery. All present were deeply impressed with the utter despairing grief of the brothers and Myrtle. This was the first incident that had broken into their busy lives to disturb the regular order of things since the death of their father some years before. They were terribly shaken.

A protracted service had been in progress at the Methodist church for a week, the pastor himself doing the preaching. Already some interest was awakened. Brother Lloyd was intensely anxious to get the Fraters into the meeting. He felt that maybe Providence had opened the way. Of course he did not expect

them at the Sunday evening service. Would they come Monday? He was anxious about it.

On Monday morning Newt said: "I didn't sleep an hour last night. I'm all to pieces. I don't know what's the matter. My appetite is gone."

Myrtle had taken the seat at the table which her sister had always occupied in former times. She appeared normal and interested in what was going on. She replied to Newt's remarks: "O, you will get better in a day or two, brother, when your nerves get quiet. We have been under an awful strain."

Joe added: "I don't feel like undertaking any business to-day, but I guess I'll have to. I am going to come in early and go to church to-night."

Newt said: "It's a good place to go. Sister was right. But I don't think I'll be able. I want to see Dr. Callender."

Si proposed to take Myrtle to the evening service, and she readily agreed. After breakfast Newt strolled off toward town looking

all caved in. He thought that maybe the time had come for a final reckoning. He felt like the judgment was near, but he moped on toward the doctor's office. Finding him in, he said: "Doctor, I'm a sick man and don't know what's the matter. I feel like I'm going to die. Can't you do something for me?"

The doctor asked: "Are you suffering any acute pain?"

"No," he replied; "I'm sick all over. I never had such strange feelings in my life."

The doctor asked a few more questions, then said: "Newt, there's nothing wrong with you except worry. You don't need any medicine. Go home and rest up, and you'll get all right in a few days."

Newt went home saying to himself: "Doctors don't know everything. I'm a sick man. I must be going to die. But I reckon I ought to die—a man who has done no good for anybody. I've just lived for Newt Frater, no one else. Any man that could neglect a pure, good Christian sister like I did! O, she was the best

woman I ever saw. I feel too mean to live and look anybody in the face, and God knows I'm not fit to die. O, I'm ruined! I feel like I'm the meanest man living. What'll I do?"

When Newt walked into his home, he looked so haggard that Myrtle said: "Brother, what in the world ails you? Are you much sick?"

"O Myrtle, I don't know what to say. I'm in a terrible fix. I wish I had sister here to pray for me. I'd like to apologize to her again. I didn't tell her just how mean I was to her, and still she kept on being just as good to me as she could."

By this time Myrtle was shedding tears. "O brother, I don't know what to tell you. I can't think of anything but sister and wanting to be good. Brother, maybe if you would pray you would feel better."

Newt made no reply. He sat for an hour with his face buried in his hands. They had late luncheon. Newt only drank a glass of milk and said that he didn't even want that. He went to his room, where he stayed alone

all the afternoon. Friends called, but Myrtle could not persuade Newt to come out or see any one except the pastor. When Myrtle told Newt that Brother Lloyd was in her room, he said: "Tell him to come in. I want to see him."

"How are you, my friend?" asked the pastor.

"O, I don't know, Brother Lloyd. Maybe you can tell me. The doctor couldn't. I never felt this way before in all my life."

The preacher queried further: "Can you describe your feelings?"

"No. Only I feel like maybe I'm going to die; and I'm a poor, miserable sinner and not fit to die."

The pastor prayed with Newt and talked with him. When Aunt Sally called them to supper, they all came in, but looked sad and had little to say. Myrtle talked more than any one else. She said she wanted to go to church, but that she didn't know what people would think about it if she did.

Si said: "I guess it will be all right. It's nobody's business but yours."

Myrtle replied: "Si, you and Joe go to-night, and I'll stay with brother."

Newt said: "I don't need any company, for I'm no company for anybody else. You can all go if you want to. I don't feel like going out."

The boys went and reported at breakfast the next morning a fine sermon and much interest in the meeting. They wished that Newt and Myrtle had heard the sermon.

"Brother Lloyd makes a fellow feel mighty mean," Si remarked.

"Don't talk about feeling mean, for goodness' sake," moaned Newt. "I don't believe I could stand to hear a sermon."

There was great interest in the revival by Friday. All the Fraters were going and were deeply interested except Newt. He had gone to business Wednesday and tried to get rid of his feelings, but failed. He didn't go to church. To make a perfectly ingenuous state-

ment about it, he was afraid to go. Somewhat shy of the preacher, more afraid of Mrs. Epperson and Mrs. Susie White, and most afraid of himself—he didn't know just what he might do. For him to go looked like a burning child rushing farther into the fire. The others overpersuaded Newt Sunday morning to go and hear Brother Lloyd. As he felt somewhat relieved, he went along the more readily with the rest.

By the time the preliminaries of the service were over Newt was perfectly calm, almost callous. He was diverted, simply entertained, by what was going on. Newt wondered: "What will the preacher's text be?" It was announced: "The words of our Lord as recorded in the Gospel of John, twelfth chapter, twenty-fourth verse: 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'" Newt asked himself: "What in the world does that mean? I'll see what he can make out of it."

The pastor preached on the sacrificial death of Christ, showing that as the grain of wheat gives up its one life according to God's plan, produces many lives, so our Lord by the unselfish giving up of his great and sinless life as a sacrifice will likewise bring forth a great harvest of souls.

"O, I see!" said Newt to himself. "I see where sister got the idea. Yes, she was like that."

Newt did not hear much more of the sermon. He was lost in meditation: "Wasn't sister the grain of wheat? O, wasn't she like the suffering Christ? Didn't she suffer on our account? I wonder if she died for us poor boys? Maybe that's the only chance the good God had to bring us to our senses and show us how selfish and mean we are." Newt grew pale and cold. Those who glanced at him thought that he must be very ill. He trembled and forgot his surroundings a few moments as the old thought seized him again: "My selfishness murdered poor Martha."

As Brother Lloyd closed his sermon he said: "Let all who will allow the death of this great Saviour to bring you to life come forward. Let the congregation stand."

Newt sat quivering, chained to his seat by the great emotion that was sweeping over him. "I wonder if Jesus died for me? No, I'm too mean. But didn't poor sister die for me, even if I was mean? And didn't she learn that from him? He must be great and good to make one like sister. I wonder if he would save me because he loved her so?" By this time he was weeping convulsively.

Many went forward whose faces were kindled with a new light. Newt and Myrtle sat throughout the service. After the benediction Newt got out and went home, talking as little as possible. Si and Joe had already united with the Church.

Newt ate lightly at lunch and went to his room. There was no cessation of praying.

Si and Joe went to an afternoon service.

About four in the afternoon Myrtle began

singing in her room: "Jesus, Lover of my soul." She had a sweet, clear voice. Newt listened. "How sweet! O those words! They were made for me." "Other refuge have I none," rang out. "That's me," said Newt. "O, will he leave me alone? I wish I could say, 'All my trust in thee is stayed.'" As she sang,

"Plenteous grace with thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin,"

Newt said: "O, I see it! I see it. He died that we might live. Sister said it would be glorious to die if it would save us. I see where she got that. Would I die for anybody? I would die for sister, if she were here. Yes, I would die if her great Saviour wanted me to. I deserve to die. O Lord, let me be like a grain of wheat!"

Newt rushed into Myrtle's room, his face radiant with a new light, saying: "Why, Myrtle, he is a great Saviour! I know he is, for he saves me, the worst of the whole lot. Myr-

tle, I never saw you look so beautiful before. Sing again, O sing! I'd give the world to see sister and tell her about it."

Myrtle said: "O brother, I'm so glad!" But she couldn't sing just then. An hour later Si and Joe came, and the four had a happy time together.

The Fraters became useful and dependable members of Lexington Church and Newt the most zealous of all. The revival was a great success, and Pastor Lloyd was very happy over the results.

X.

A Dinner Party.

THE attractive home of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Perkins, of Lexington, was the center of interest to a small company of invited friends on a Thursday evening early in November, 1914. The gentlemen in the party had been carefully chosen with a purpose in mind. Their wives were also made welcome, some of whom would have been invited irrespective of the fact that the presence of their husbands was desired. All present were Church people, officials and members of the Lexington Methodist Church, with the single exception of a former pastor. Mr. Perkins himself was one of the official members. The dinner was a convenient method of assembling these friends, but only an incident to the main purpose. Mr. Perkins, for many years a zealous member of the Church, was liberal and progressive and spared no pains to bring to full

fruitage his best-matured plans for the good of the cause which he had so enthusiastically and consistently espoused.

As the years went by he became increasingly interested in the various enterprises of the Church. Of late he had experienced a great awakening in regard to the care of superannuated ministers and the widows and children of deceased preachers. It was his interest in their welfare which had suggested and inspired the present meeting.

With great care he had selected the guests because of his confidence in their sound judgment and Christian zeal. They were as follows: Rev. W. B. Lloyd, pastor; the Rev. Porter Phillips, a former pastor; Messrs. Henry Spencer, W. W. Epperson, J. Y. Jones, D. O. White, Allen Carter, and their wives; Newton Frater, a bachelor, and Miss Nettie Markham, whose congeniality and warmth of friendship were inviting local comment. It is worth while to state that Mrs. D. O. White was formerly Miss Susie Pointer, whose valuable identity

should not be lost in any man's name; and the former Miss Lucy Lowman, conspicuously efficient in good deeds, is now Mrs. Allen Carter.

To employ Miss Markham's words, "the six o'clock dinner was perfectly splendid," and was greatly enjoyed by all present. The dinner over, the real intention of Mr. Perkins was revealed. It is true that he had not been careful to make this a *sub rosa* affair, for he had discussed his plans with the pastor and Mr. Spencer. At the conclusion of the dinner the host said: "We shall now without loss of time repair to the sitting room and engage in the real business of the hour." All comfortably seated, Mr. Perkins introduced the topic of the evening, which of late had so completely obsessed him, by saying:

I desire that this meeting shall be entirely informal, free, and unfettered, as I wish you and your remarks to be, while we consider what I have come to believe is the most urgent as well as the most sadly overlooked matter in our great Church.

My zeal in behalf of our superannuated preachers and the widows and orphans I need not mention, for it is known to all of you. I deplore the fact that our Conference is not paying these worthy people enough to keep them in comfort, in some instances not enough to supply them with the indispensable items of living. My information is to the effect that a similar state of affairs exists more or less in many of the Conferences. While my pleasure is very great in having you as my guests this evening, I will be frank enough to admit that my main purpose is to have the benefit of your counsel in finding ways and means of bringing into existence a more desirable situation for our worthy Conference claimants.

I have written Brother Phillips to come and be with us, knowing his interest in the cause, and I sincerely thank him for being present. We are here for discussion and for suggestion; to talk earnestly and freely; to ask and, as far as possible, answer questions; to talk informally on straight lines; to go to the heart of the matter; to talk as a man and his family would whose home was about to be swept from them by foreclosure of mortgage, as earnestly as

bank directors would talk in a crisis threatening their institution, as earnestly as a council of war should be held.

Because of his wide experience, his knowledge, and his interest in the work, I am going to ask Brother Phillips to give us a brief outline of the general situation.

Brother Phillips said:

Thanking Brother Perkins on behalf of our veterans for his zealous efforts to increase their comfort, I will say that this is a subject in which, of course, I feel a profound interest, as all ministers should. Perhaps there are very few of the preachers who do not hesitate to speak their full convictions and feelings on the subject. Really, I have come to think that we preachers are sometimes overmodest in that we do not give out information and facts in our possession which, if known throughout the Church, would stir the people to more earnest endeavor to secure the relief so much desired.

I am glad to say that our preachers are beginning to speak out more boldly and more frequently than formerly; and, what is better still, many of our laymen are becoming interested in

the cause. Doubtless you will recall that when I was your pastor I was fortunate enough to secure the services of that great layman, Brother Hubert Howard, who made us that masterful address. I have heard few to equal and none to surpass it. There is unquestionably a deepening of concern in our Church and, I think, in all of the Churches for a better support for retired preachers and the widows and children. In all the Churches this subject is receiving special attention. Nearly every Protestant denomination has some sort of organized effort to provide permanent pension or retirement funds for their aged ministers, widows, and children. The aggregate sum desired in American Protestantism in permanent funds for this purpose is sixty-five million dollars.

Conspicuous and gratifying success is crowning the efforts of some of the Churches, especially in the North, where the Presbyterians already have a four-million-dollar endowment fund and expect to increase it to ten million dollars. The Methodist Episcopal Church has passed the five-million-dollar mark and is going for the handsome amount of fifteen million dollars as a total fund. The Protestant Episcopal

Church, the Baptist Church, the Disciples of Christ, and others are earnestly engaged in this laudable undertaking. So there is a decidedly more promising aspect on the whole situation.

Our Conference has an invested fund of forty thousand dollars. Many other Conferences in our Church have similar funds, the aggregate of which runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Conference endowment fund is very popular in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and it is chiefly through this channel that they are securing the large sums which are being reported for this cause. No doubt the Conference invested fund will become very popular with us, and through this channel large sums will flow into the treasury for this noble work.

The Superannuate Endowment Fund, with a minimum mark of five million dollars set, has made a fair beginning; and the main and dependable source of its growth is an assessment fixed by law on all the Annual Conferences. Superannuate homes are provided in a number of the Conferences and in some of them have become quite a feature.

From the current collections in all the Con-

ferences and the income from invested funds, we are disbursing to our two thousand superannuate families approximately three hundred thousand dollars annually. It is easy to estimate that the average amount received per family is about one hundred and fifty dollars—a sum shamefully small.

Mr. Perkins said: "Indeed it is. Brother Spencer, you have been for some time a member of the Conference Board which looks after this business. Let us hear from you."

Mr. Spencer responded: "Brother Perkins, I am deeply interested in this subject. No man who has the slightest sense of justice and even a little of the 'milk of human kindness' can serve on our Joint Board of Finance without having his nerves completely upset. Every year I come from Conference sick at heart over what I have seen and heard. Scores of applications are made to us for more liberal aid, which we are powerless to grant—some of these by the old veterans in person, detailing modestly their heart-stirring stories, in

which it plainly appears that they are not receiving enough to keep the 'wolf from the door'—and yet each one concludes his statement usually in some such words as, 'Do the best you can for me with the means at command and in justice to others. I want to be fair and brotherly with all of the other claimants.' Many written statements are received, and numbers of interested friends make personal appeals in behalf of the old men and the widows which, it seems to me, are sufficient to move the heart of stone. In our Conference the largest allowance is three hundred dollars, only three receiving that amount, and others receive smaller sums down to twenty-five dollars. The average amount is about one hundred and forty dollars for a year's support."

Mrs. Epperson interrupted: "Excuse me, please. You don't mean that that is all they have for a year's living?"

Mr. Spencer answered: "Yes; and many of them have no other source of income or help."

Mrs. Epperson rejoined: "Well, how in the world do they exist? I am free to say that I cannot see."

Mr. Spencer said: "We all feel the same way about it. We wonder how they live. But there's another strange fact to me. More than once when propositions have been made in our Board to increase the assessments, so that we might pay more to the claimants, some of the preachers on the Board have voted against the measure and defeated it. The Board, as you perhaps know, is composed of an equal number of preachers and laymen."

Mr. Wilson asked: "Mr. Spencer, what motive could they have for such opposition? I can't understand. Aren't they standing in their own light?"

Mr. Spencer replied: "Evidently. Sometimes I have heard them say that they do not wish to increase the assessments, which they have to collect from the people."

Newt Frater said: "Well, the right kind of people will be glad to pay enough to make the

claimants comfortable. I think the stewards ought to collect all the assessments, anyway; and, then, certainly none of the preachers could object to a necessary increase. Excuse me, Brother Lloyd.

Brother Lloyd answered: "I most heartily agree with you on that proposition."

Mr. Spencer continued: "I am perfectly confident that if our Board should increase the assessments until they are large enough to meet the demands, and if they were intelligently placed before the Churches, they could be easily collected in nearly every instance."

Mr. Perkins remarked: "Brother Spencer, I am glad to hear you say that, since you have had much experience and are in position to express an intelligent opinion. I have been slow to believe that our good Methodist folk are as remiss in their duty to our veteran preachers as circumstances often indicate. Brother Lloyd, what do you think is the greatest obstacle in the way of providing adequately for our claimants?"

Brother Lloyd answered: "First, insufficient assessments and extreme conservatism in increasing them. Secondly, the delicate attitude which the preachers maintain toward the whole subject. What Brother Spencer said about preachers voting against increasing assessments is true, for when I was a member of the Board I witnessed it and was greatly astonished at such action. But there is another view more complimentary to those who assume that attitude, and that is this: they construe that the increase is partly for them or will be, and they would rather do without the added benefit than have an increased assessment placed on the membership. I regard this view as a serious error, for the people would gladly pay more to this sacred claim. I will say this: If you will cut deep enough in the breast of the average preacher, you will find a great, big, unselfish heart; but to most of the preachers another assessment is a 'red rag.'"

Mr. Jones argued: "Liberal assessments are made for other great enterprises of the Church,

and why not for the worn-out preachers? To provide amply for retired preachers will raise the standard of efficiency in our ministry; and, from that viewpoint, it will pay the Church to do it."

Brother Lloyd replied: "I believe that, Brother Jones; but you know that we preachers rely largely upon the popularity of this claim to carry it through, and sometimes we even make it carry other collections because it is the most popular. The general feeling is that the good Lord and the people will not allow our old preachers and widows to be in want, that some happy fortuity will protect them. For assuming this attitude we are not blameless."

Mr. Perkins interjected: "I beg pardon, but I wish to be heard just here. The preachers have given us faithful and valuable services, decent and helpful and clean. We never can compensate them for the blessings they have conveyed to us, for they are infinite in value and eternal in duration. Please pardon me for a personal reference. I was a poor, miser-

able sinner, a disbeliever, skeptical, and lost when that good man, the Rev. Thomas Robertson—God bless him!—crossed my path; and it was a path of living light crossing and lighting up a path of gross darkness. Years ago, when he was pastor here in Lexington, I heard him preach on the subject of 'Christian Brotherhood' and afterwards encountered him in a face-to-face talk, really a friendly combat, and he won out and took me prisoner for Jesus Christ. I have been trying ever since to 'fight the good fight of faith' in my humble way. As you know, Brother Robertson retired a few years ago because of broken health. I made him a visit recently to see him again and find out how things are going with him. I am greatly disturbed over what I saw. I did not hear much. He is reticent about himself. He did tell me, in answer to a direct question, that he and his good wife received for the last year's support two hundred dollars. And, mind you, he has to rent a house out of this pittance. They simply cannot live decently on

such a sum. However, I happen to be aware of the fact that he has received some outside help; otherwise they must have been in sad circumstances. He is too noble and self-respecting to complain. I believe that he would die before he would cast reproach upon the Church in the service of which he has given his life. I had not seen Dr. Robertson for several years, although we pass occasional letters; and of the few things he said bearing on this subject, that which touched me most deeply was this: 'I never served a pastorate that I enjoyed as much as I did the four years at Lexington. Those people seemed so congenial to me that I had often looked forward to making Lexington my home if I should live to be superannuated. But when I was retired, in casting about to carry out my long-cherished dream I awoke with a sort of shock to the fact that it was impossible for me to live there. I could not afford it. I did not receive a sufficient amount to enable me to reside in a place where the cost of living was so high. Then I

found this little village of Dexter, where house rent is very cheap and living simple and not so expensive, and settled here. The people are kind, but the feeling of aloneness is something oppressive. But that is a part of the itinerant program, I suppose. We try to be thankful for what we have and that it is no worse.' "

"The fact that worries me," continued Mr. Perkins, "is that the Conference or the Church could make him and all claimants perfectly comfortable, as far as a living is concerned, and no one have to do on a spoonful of sugar less. If I had only one dodger of bread between me and starvation and should find Brother Robertson in similar distress, I would say: 'Come, let us eat our cake of bread together before we die.' Friends, where is our great Christian brotherhood? I came to believe in it as Brother Robertson preached it, and I believe in it still; but O cannot brothers grow careless of their obligation? Do they not sometimes become neglectful?"

Newt interrupted: "Mr. Perkins, will you let me say something?"

"Why, certainly, Newt. Glad to hear from you."

Newt went on: "I don't know so much about this Christian brotherhood, only I'm mighty glad to be in it; but if you will let me put it just as it is in life, I can answer that question about brothers being neglectful. I know they can. If you will pardon me, I will make a confession. I'll never get done confessing how we boys just went mad after money and paid no attention to the Church nor anything else and left sister so lonely; and when we came to our senses, she was nearly gone. O, I never can get over it the longest day I live. Yes, brothers can forget, and they do. It wasn't because we didn't love her. Why, I feel now that I would be willing to take her place in the grave if I could and let her come back and live in my place. Excuse me for talking this way. It may seem foolish to you, but it's the truth."

"Well, Newt, my dear brother, you show a

beautiful spirit, and we are all rejoiced over the stand you have taken for the right. God bless you!" said Mr. Perkins.

"Your reference to Dr. Robertson stirs my very soul," continued Newt. "He married my father and mother, and sister joined the Church when he was pastor here. He has always been a great friend of the family, and for him to be in need is just too much for us to submit to tamely. Mr. Perkins, please allow me the pleasure of helping out in this case. And just to think that he can't live among his old friends! I think I can remedy that. I have a nice comfortable cottage here in town that I'll be happy to turn over to Dr. Robertson and his wife, free of rent, as long as they may want it; and I think I will just reserve it in the future for that purpose."

By this time the company had become thoroughly enthused. Mr. Perkins, scarcely able to control himself, said: "This begins to look like doing something. Newt, I congratulate

you for having the two requisites for this glorious work, the ability and the liberality.

"Referring again to the obligations of the Christian brotherhood," continued Mr. Perkins, "the question is, Are we Christians, spiritual brothers, going to treat the most unselfish members of our large household—the preachers and their wives—as though they were strangers and aliens? Are we going to neglect them so?"

Mr. White remarked: "I was at Conference last year and heard an old preacher say substantially this: 'I have been in the active work as an itinerant preacher forty-eight years. The time has come for me to retire from the field. I have kept out of debt and educated my children. They have gone out in life to do for themselves. I had small salaries, an average of about five hundred dollars a year, from which it was impossible to save anything for the day of need, which has arrived. The rain is falling, and I have no shelter. I face a new situation from this time on. What shall my

wife and I do? Why, we can trust in the Lord. We shall now be compelled in temporal as well as in spiritual things to "walk by faith," for nothing is in sight. It is hard enough for the old preacher to retire when he knows that plenty and comfort await him; but when his companions are to be hunger, want, and humiliation, it is inexpressibly hard.' "

Mr. Perkins replied: "O the pity of it! And yet, Brother White, you have not cited an extreme case, as I happen to know. I have investigated extensively and have come to realize that there is oftener understatement of painful facts than overstatement. Brother Phillips, your allusion to permanent funds invested for the benefit of claimants is cheering. The fact that a large number of the Conferences have such funds—and some of them are growing to respectable proportions, a hundred thousand dollars or more—is indeed encouraging. And, then, I rejoice that the Superannuate Endowment Fund has been established with the determination to raise at least five million dollars

and that it is meeting with encouraging success. I have never put money into anything yet that has given me more satisfaction than what I have paid to this fund. One thought that invariably starts a song of melody in my heart is this: After the Master calls me from the field of labor and I can work no longer, the money that I have in this fund will work for me, helping these dear people to whom all of us owe so much. I have also purchased an annuity bond for four thousand dollars, on which the Board pays me a low rate of interest because I did not ask for a high rate, and I am sorry that I am compelled to charge interest at all. This money is exactly where I want it to be and want it to remain. I hope to place more in this fund. I beg pardon for mentioning these facts and do so in confidence, hoping that you will not repeat it and use my name. Brother Phillips, in what direction do you think we may look for the earliest enlargement and surest development of this great interest of the Church?"

Brother Phillips replied: "Answering briefly, I would say: Emphasize and increase the regular collections in the Annual Conferences as much as possible. We preachers must take a more prominent part in this. The Superannuate Endowment Fund is supported by a uniform assessment on the Conferences by the law of the Church, and its growth is assured. In addition, I would suggest that the Annual Conferences build up as rapidly as possible their Conference endowment funds. The Conference Board should coöperate heartily with the Board of Trustees of the Church, as the law provides, in completing the general fund. Then doubtless the General Board will gladly coöperate in establishing and fostering the Conference funds; and thus, all working together toward this one glorious achievement—namely, comfortable support for all claimants—the joy of our hearts will, in the not distant future, be fulfilled."

Mr. Perkins said: "O, if we could only live to see it! The dream of my recent years has

been comfort for the old veterans of the cross and their widows and children."

"It is very gratifying, Brother Perkins," said Brother Phillips, "to hear you express such ardent wishes. I have no doubt that the Church is going to push forward this work to a happy consummation. The spirit of pensions is in the present-day thought of the world. Why should it not also agitate the mind of the Church? Your zeal and liberality in this good work, Brother Perkins, are to be most heartily commended. Our men of large means should pay into this great fund. Large dividends will be declared both in the increased comfort of those who receive and in the more blessed satisfaction of those who give. There is another feature in connection with the Superannuate Endowment Fund which has not been alluded to and which is quite attractive to some people. It is the memorial feature. How much better it is to put money into a memorial fund than in a marble shaft! In the fund it yields perpetual

income and benefit and, besides, is a more fitting memorial."

"Brother Phillips, I like that suggestion you make," said Newt with a ring of enthusiasm in his voice. "I have thought a good deal of late about the old preachers and their claims on us. Especially during the last two years, since I changed my way of living, I have given the matter a good deal of consideration. I remember when you had Hubert Howard to speak here on that subject. Sister Martha often talked about how glad she would be to put money into that good cause, but she never had the chance. O, if I only had been a Christian sooner and had given her opportunity to do what she desired! We all had everything together, and still have it that way. Sister was entitled to her part, and a good share too. Now I propose that we—the boys, Myrtle, and I—pay into this fund fifty thousand dollars, and it shall be called the Martha Frater Memorial Fund. I know they will agree. It is really sister's money. We are not doing it."

This unexpected turn of things was the sensation of the evening. Both thanks and congratulations rained on Newt from every quarter of the room. Mr. Perkins had grown ecstatic. Brother Phillips, with emotion in his tone, said: "Newton Frater, God bless you! This bit of news will overjoy Hubert Howard. I'll write him about it."

Mr. Perkins added: "It is simply glorious! What a great occasion this is to-night, and how significant! The Church can accomplish this moderate task and never curtail a luxury. It was said of one in whose behalf appeal was made to Jesus: 'He is worthy that thou shouldst do this for him: for he . . . himself built us our synagogue.' These veterans of the cross and widows are worthy that the Church should do this for them; for they have built, not synagogues, but lives."

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